

THE ASEAN-INDIA DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

“The ASEAN-India strategic partnership lies on a strong foundation of our shared historical, geographical, and civilizational ties. It is driven by our common strategic priorities of promoting peace, security, stability, and prosperity in the region.”

By **TPT Bureau** - August 17, 2021



The year 2022 will mark the 30th anniversary of **ASEAN-India relations** and will be designated as the **“ASEAN-India Friendship Year”**. In order to strengthen the people to people and institutional linkages, the Asian Confluence, India, the ASEAN Studies Centre of ISEAS – **Yusof Ishak Institute**, and the ASEAN-India Centre at the **Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)**, New Delhi launched their first joint programme entitled **“ASEAN-India Development Partnership Programme (AIDPP)”**, a training and capacity building programme for scholars and practitioners of ASEAN countries and India. Held in virtual mode from 16-20 August 2021, this week-long training programme comprises lectures by eminent scholars on various facets of ASEAN-India relations. The ASEAN-India Development Partnership Programme was flagged off at an inaugural session on 16 August 2021 attended by Mr V.V. Sapkal, Joint Secretary (South), India’s Ministry of External Affairs; Mr Mark Neo, Director-General, ASEAN Directorate, Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr Choi Shing Kwok, Director and CEO of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute; Prof Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of RIS; Mr M. P. Bezbaruah, Chairman, Asian Confluence Governing Council; Ms Sharon Seah, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of ASEAN Studies Centre at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute; Dr Prabir De, Head of the ASEAN-India Centre, RIS; and Mr Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director of the Asian Confluence.

In his inaugural remarks, **Mr Vishvas Vidu Sapkal**, Joint Secretary (South), India’s Ministry of External Affairs said “The ASEAN India relationship is multifaceted and I am glad to note that the three institutions Asian Confluence; **ASEAN-India Centre (AIC)** and the ASEAN Studies Centre of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore have taken this initiative to introduce the participants to the broad and overarching themes of the ASEAN India relations” while touching upon several aspects of the relationship. “The ASEAN-India strategic partnership lies on a strong foundation of our shared

historical, geographical and civilizational ties. It is driven by our common strategic priorities of promoting peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region. This relationship has gone beyond its cultural and economic dimensions. India and ASEAN share the pluralistic natures of our societies encompassing many religions of the world and its diverse cultures”, he added.

Mr Mark Neo, Director-General, ASEAN Directorate, Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Singapore had always been a staunch supporter of India’s engagement with ASEAN. Noting that the relationship has grown stronger and deeper over the years, there was nevertheless more both sides could do under Singapore’s country coordinators of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations from 2021 to 2024. In this regard, Singapore has identified a number of priority areas of cooperation: digital transformation, cybersecurity, smart cities, research and innovation, and regional economic integration. As ASEAN and India celebrate the 30th anniversary of Dialogue Relations in 2022, Mr Neo welcomed India to keep up its engagement and explore opportunities to play a more active role in the region.

Prof Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of the RIS, New Delhi in his opening remarks talked about the programme as an attempt to bring in three different elements together. It is also an insight into how the economic relationships have progressed between ASEAN and India. In the post-**COVID** era, the challenges have multiplied. The fiscal space and the unlimited flow of finance are no longer as easy as before and **FINTECH** is a new way forward for vast strategic initiatives. In this concluding decade, where we have only nine years to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we have to work in a collaborative manner for their successful implementation

In his remarks, **Mr Choi Shing Kwok**, Director and CEO of ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute highlighted the warm, robust, and mutually beneficial ties cultivated by ASEAN and India over the past three decades, their fruitful partnership in ASEAN-led mechanisms as well as their strong commitment to multilateralism and regionalism for advancing peace and stability in the region. Notwithstanding this, the full potential of relations has not been realised. Mr Choi said the conditions for deeper engagement between ASEAN and India have changed. In the face of the changing global geostrategic environment, particularly the US-China competition, and the economic impact of the **COVID-19** pandemic, ASEAN and India are now poised for rapid and accelerated progress in further deepening their engagement. Both parties can look to augment India’s security and strategic presence in Southeast Asia to reinforce norms and values that are deeply held by their peoples. India is expected to remain an important strategic partner for ASEAN for the decades ahead.

Mr M. P. Bezbaruah, Chairman of the Asian Confluence Governing Council in his inaugural remarks highlighted the role of institutional collaborations between ASEAN and India to address how the huge potential in collaborations can be activated. “The Asian Confluence is always ready to contribute towards this effort”, he said.

“We are delighted to put together this initiative with the ASEAN-India Centre at RIS, New Delhi, and the Asian Confluence. This programme will go a long way in building a sustained institutional relationship and foster further institutional and people to people linkages between ASEAN and India”, said Ms Sharon Seah, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of ASEAN Studies Centre at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.

“Singapore has taken over from Thailand as the country coordinator for ASEAN-India dialogue relations in August 2021 and will continue in this role until 2024. The **ASEAN-India Centre (AIC)** at RIS is very pleased to be part of this partnership with the ASEAN Studies Centre of ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, a leading think-tank in the ASEAN region, and the Asian Confluence, a premier institution headquartered in our Northeast region to present this timely initiative. Fostering the

partnership with ASEAN will lead to the strengthening of global recovery”, said Dr Prabir De, Head of the ASEAN-India Centre, RIS, New Delhi.

“We are very encouraged by the responses to this first edition from across various disciplines in India and ASEAN. We plan this as a sustained initiative to build capacity and create a community of ground-level champions consisting of various stakeholders across India and ASEAN”, said Mr Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence, India.

Sponsored by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** of India, this five-day training programme will include lectures on ASEAN-India relations and strategic imperatives, the deepening of ASEAN-India trade integration and the changing profile of ASEAN-India investment relations and B2B engagements, multilateralism in the post-COVID-19 world, ASEAN-India in the Indo-Pacific region, issues on ASEAN-India production networks in the face of the shifting global supply chains; as well as explore possible areas of people to people collaboration. Attendees will receive a certificate of participation. The next edition of AIDPP will be held later in 2021 or early 2022.

Summary

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